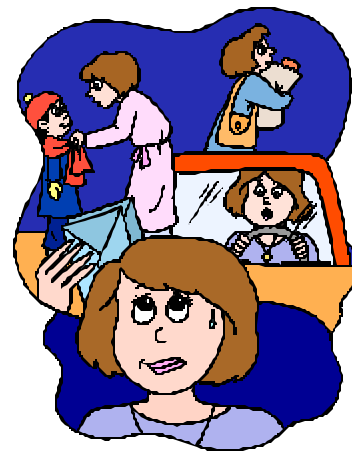


Balancing Work and Family

One of the most important things women have to work out is how to balance work and family in every part of life. No matter how far you rise up the professional ladder you never escape challenges which all working mothers face: How to be two places at once; how to get the dry cleaning and shop for groceries when you can't leave work early; how to pick up your daughter at soccer when a meeting is suddenly called, how to find time for yourself—to relax and to exercise. It's especially hard for single mothers.



Even women with partners must deal with the burden of being mostly responsible for child rearing and housekeeping, which generally equal one full-time job. If both you and your partner have full-time careers, it's only reasonable to insist that you both do 1 ½ jobs, instead of you doing what amounts to two full-time jobs. You can also pay others to do chores: pick up, delivery, dinners out, ordering online, etc. Don't accept an unfair burden; communicate, work it out. In the end you'll get what you settle for.

Because women's work and home lives constantly shift and evolve, women must learn to look, not for a permanent solution, but for a way of addressing these issues when they arise—and they will.

Dealing with Stress: You can't avoid stress—it's a fact of life. Maybe the best skill any of us learns in life is to deal effectively with stress by developing strategies to minimize it.

- Take control of your thoughts and outlook. Remember, you are always making choices. You have the power to make different choices and change things, if you decide to. Of course, choices have price tags attached. Weigh the price against the benefits, make the best choice you can, and move on. Worrying and second-guessing yourself only produces more stress.
- Choose to have a positive attitude. Try to associate with positive, supportive people. Choose to see setbacks and obstacles simply as decisions to be made, not judgements of yourself or a reason to give up.
- Make meeting your own needs a top priority. In order to give your best to other people you must first take care of your own basic needs: A healthy diet, exercise, 7-8 hours sleep each night. We also have a basic human need to feel good about ourselves. Happy, mature people have learned to meet this need for themselves. Give yourself the recognition, appreciation and love you would give a friend. When you do a thing well, congratulate yourself. Remember to tell yourself some good things about yourself every day. If there is somebody in your life that is running you down, making you feel worthless or unlovable, you must deal with that situation. You can set (and reinforce) firm boundaries, or you can choose to distance yourself from that person. Either way, you are taking control of your own life and meeting your own needs.



Explore Ways to Make your Job Suit Your Needs

Job Sharing, Flex Time and Telecommuting

The corporate world is becoming increasingly more willing to provide alternative work arrangements. But be aware that there is always a trade-off.

Job sharing requires that you can find another person (probably another working mother) who is willing to work part-time and share one full-time job with you. There are potential problems that must be dealt with up-front and on an ongoing basis: Income will be reduced. Benefits may not be available, or may be scaled back. Also, close coordination is a must between the two people sharing a job, and both need to be willing to do a little extra on a daily basis to ensure that nothing falls between the cracks.

Flex time means being able to work at times other than the traditional business hours. It may mean starting and leaving earlier or later, taking a weekday off and working one day on the weekend, or any other non-traditional arrangement of your work time that your employer agrees to. A trade-off may be your accessibility to coworkers and clients could suffer unless you make extra concessions for their needs. Again, it is up to you to ensure that the work and your employer do not suffer for allowing you to work non-traditional hours.

Telecommuting is perhaps the most beneficial and revolutionary change in the working world today. It is all due to the technology now available: Home computers, the Internet, faxes, cell phones, etc. Your job may be one that is suitable for working from home if it relies on the computer and the phone for the most part—not on personal contact. Most people who telecommute only do so part of the time—2 or 3 days each week. Meetings, and other situations may require your physical presence at the company site, but can still be less than all day, every day. Just be sure, again, that you demonstrate that you can do the job just as well from home as you could in the office. Your employer must be convinced that the work (and the bottom line) are not hurt by your telecommuting.

How to Get the Arrangement you Want

You will need to negotiate with your employer. Remember, you have to prove that the employer and the work will not suffer in any way if you get the arrangement you want—so do your research on all potential objections before approaching your employer, and have a solution ready for each one.

- Be willing to bring up different alternatives. If someone else in your organization has paved the way, great. But you may have to start from scratch convincing your employer to change the way work gets done.
- Know what your own priorities are and be willing to compromise on the ones that are less dear to your heart. For instance, you may need to give up some benefits or vacation time in order to get the arrangement you want.
- If job-sharing is what you want, find out before hand if someone else in your organization is willing to be the sharing partner for your job. Make sure both of you realize the potential trade-offs and problems in advance.
- Be ready to prove that you can get the job done with no negative effects to your employer.

For more information: <http://www.scbn.com/balance.html>

<http://www.familiesandwork.org/>

<http://www.familyfriendly.ie/workarrpage.shtml>

<http://content.monster.com/wlb/archives/flexitime/>

http://www.advancingwomen.com/wk_balancing.html

<http://wflc.od.nih.gov/>

<http://www.successfulways.com/negotiate.html>

<http://salary.monster.co.nz/extras/8071/>

<http://www.athomemothers.com/infoguides/36a3.htm>

<http://www.rezamaze.com/attire.html>